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United States Attorney
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAWRENCE, KANSAS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO POSSESSING A FIREARM IN RELATION TO A DRUG TRAFFICKING CRIME

TOPEKA, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Richard Raymond Alex Rios**, 32, Lawrence, Kansas, entered a guilty plea on July 7, 2003, before U.S. District Judge Richard D. Rogers to one count of possessing a firearm in relation to a drug trafficking crime.

Melgren said that on September 18, 2002, Rios was stopped by the Lawrence Police Department for a traffic violation. The officer issued Rios a citation for driving with a suspended license and no valid insurance card. The officer obtained permission from Rios to search a red backpack behind the driver's seat. The officer found a glass smoking pipe, a golf-ball sized chunk of methamphetamine and a digital scale inside the backpack. The officer also found a loaded pistol under the driver's seat and a small hatchet and twelve inch knife stuck between the front passenger seat and the center console. Rios admitted at his plea that on September 18, 2002, he possessed a firearm in relation to the drug trafficking crime of possession with the intent to distribute 50 grams or more (1.76 ounces or more) of methamphetamine.

Rios faces a minimum of five years in federal prison without parole. Sentencing is set for October 8, 2003, at 10:00 a.m.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the Lawrence Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg Hough in this prosecution. "Under Project Safe Neighborhoods, a national initiative to reduce gun violence in our communities, we will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute those who use guns in furtherance of drug crimes," Melgren said.